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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results and educational implications of an experimental, comparative study evaluating the gains in overall writing quality in two groups of college freshmen composition students. The experimental group of 45 students learned to compose their first four of eight essays on the computer, while their professor intervened with feedback during their writing processes. The control group of 43 students did not receive this instructional treatment, as their instructor gave them feedback only after grading each of their eight handwritten products. The researchers hypothesized that feedback from the professor during the planning and composing processes, especially on the computer, was statistically more effective on students' writing quality than the other instructor's graded feedback on students' handwritten products. This study used a quantitative, pretest/post-test experimental design, with statistical analysis (paired T-tests). According to the results, the students' gains in overall writing quality, between pretest and post-test essays, were statistically significant for both comparison groups of college freshmen writers. However, statistically, there was a highly significant difference between the two groups in the students' post-test outcomes. The experimental group had significantly higher post-test scores and showed more significant gains in writing quality than the control group. In addition, students in the experimental group learned long-term skills in word processing for successful communication on any writing assignment. This study also suggests numerous variables or features in teaching writing for further research, helping educators realize that remaining "up close and personal" facilitates their students' planning, composing, and revising, especially on the computer, to produce much more effective college writers, as well as more successful graduates and employees. (Contains 20 references and 2 tables of data; an appendix presents a description of the essay scoring procedure.) (Author/EF)

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The Effects of Computer Skills and Feedback on the Gains in Students' Overall Writing Quality in College Freshman Composition Courses

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Abstract

This paper reports the results and educational implications of an experimental, comparative study evaluating the gains in overall writing quality in two groups of college freshman composition students: The experimental group of 45 students learned to compose their first four of eight essays on the computer, while their professor intervened with feedback during their writing processes, from planning through drafting and revising their essays; however, the control group of 43 students did not usually receive this instructional treatment, as their instructor gave them feedback only after grading each of their eight handwritten products. The researchers of this study hypothesized that feedback from the professor during planning and the composing process, especially on the computer, was statistically more effective in the students' outcomes on writing quality than the other instructor's graded feedback on the students' handwritten products. This study used a quantitative, pretest/post-test experimental design, with statistical analysis (paired T-tests), to find the answers for this inquiry.

According to the results, the students' gains in overall writing quality, between pretest and post-test essays, were statistically significant for both comparison groups of college freshman writers. However, statistically, there was a highly significant difference between the two groups in the students'

post-test outcomes. The experimental group, who received feedback during the planning and composing processes on the computer, had significantly higher post-test scores and showed more significant gains in writing quality than the control group, who did not receive this same teaching treatment, thus supporting the hypothesis of the study.

These statistical findings suggest that, compared to the control group, the experimental group made more significant gains and higher outcomes in writing quality because these students' writing greatly benefitted from their professor's feedback while he intervened during their planning and composing processes on the computer. These students learned long-term skills in word processing for successful communication on any writing assignment. This study also suggests numerous variables or features in teaching writing for further research, helping educators realize that remaining "up close and personal" facilitates their students' planning, composing and revising, especially on the computer, to produce much more effective college writers, as well as more successful graduates and employees.

In college freshman composition, pedagogical approaches differ widely, especially for students receiving feedback during their composing process on the computer. These methods range from "product-centered feedback of Current Traditional Rhetoric" (the teacher grading and commenting on the written product after the writing process) to "process based feedback" (the teacher intervening during each student's planning and composing processes on the computer before submitting the final product for grading).

While studies have examined the question of how effective feedback is on students' writing quality, very little research has examined how improved student writing correlates with professors' feedback on students' composing processes facilitated by the computer. In this study, the researchers did attempt to determine whether feedback during the pre-writing(planning) and writing process on the computer was more effective than feedback in the post-writing phase of the final, graded product on the gains and outcomes in writing quality for 45 students in the experimental group and 43 students in the control group.

Two English professors taught two freshman composition classes each, using a combination of the traditional essay forms, instruction in writing mechanics and grammar skills, and the composing-process model. However, each professor used a different approach of engaging the students in the writing process and giving feedback on their compositions: In the experimental group

the professor gave feedback during the students' planning and composing processes on the computer; in the control group without the computer, the other professor gave only written feedback after the students' handwritten products had already been graded. The researchers hypothesized that students in the experimental group composing on the computer would show significant gains and outcomes in writing quality over the control group of students handwriting all of their essays.

This study used a quantitative, pretest and post-test, experimental design with statistical analysis (paired T-tests) to assess these important variables in teaching composition to these students in the experimental group and in the control group.

Review of Related Research

For at least 20 years, researchers have studied the effects of instructors' feedback on students' writing, either examining written comments or oral comments in writing conferences. Recently, Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) designed a study to trace the effects of teacher conferences on students' subsequent efforts in writing. They stated:

> Responding to student writing is an integral aspect of composition teaching. Researchers have examined both teachers' response to student writing and one-to one teacher-student writing conferences as important sources of teacher feedback and instruction for developing student writers. (P.51)

The results of Patthey-Chavez and Ferris' study showed that the effects of writing conferences on students' revisions and subsequent writing helped them improve their drafts to a "passing" quality of "more acceptable academic discourse" (p.83).

Hillocks (1986), in his meta-analysis of instructional modes in composition, reported: "The major assumption underlying most treatments categorized as belonging to the individualized mode [of instruction] is that a teacher working with a single student is more effective than a teacher working with a whole class" (p.128). Some of Hillocks other instructional modes were the "natural process" and the "environmental method, the latter of which was the most effective approach for teaching composition in his meta-analysis; both of these modes may include the "individualized" approach as well; during one-to-one conferences both teachers and peers provide feedback to student writers before they produce a final draft. Stein (1984) has suggested that a major reason for the success of this "environmental approach" may be its increased opportunities for feedback.

Hillocks (1986) further concluded in his meta-analysis that feedback tied to either pre-writing or revision did increase the quality of writing by helping students meet certain goals in composition. Ironically, though, Hillocks claimed that the overall research reported in his review (1986) suggested that feedback had very little effect on enhancing the quality of students' writing. However, Hillocks did state: "Most treatments

included in the meta-analysis which include feedback and revision also include some instruction prior to writing" (pp. 219).

In some other studies (Beach, 1979; Clifford, 1981; Hillocks, 1982) feedback from the teacher produced significant gains in the students' writing quality. Also, in an exploratory study of students' reactions to teachers' comments for feedback, Straub (1997) reported that students mostly preferred helpful criticism as feedback for improving their writing. Also, regular feedback from teachers can improve students' thinking and writing even in a course such as math (Johnson, Jones, Thornton, Langrall, & Rous, 1998).

Researchers have also explored the effectiveness of computer-mediated communication in the writing classroom of college undergraduates (Yageliski and Grabill, 1998), in addition to giving a historical account of computers in the teaching of writing throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Hawisher, Selfe, Moran and LeBlanc, 1996). Anson (1999) even states: "Until recently, writing instruction has experienced the greatest technological impact from the personal computer, a tool that had an especially powerful effect on the teaching and practice of revision." In recent research, Slattery and Kowalski (1998) studied the composing processes of first-year and upper-level college students on the computer, finding that when composing on screen, many first-year students expanded their writing processes by making discourse-level revisions, and many upper-level students

tended to abbreviate their writing process. Slattery and Kowalski concluded that students can learn and adopt various writing strategies when using a computer. In an experimental study years earlier, Etchison (1986) reported that the computer/word processing group of college freshman composition students made statistically significant gains in writing quality over the handwriting group.

Similarly, in the current experimental study the researchers tried to determine whether feedback during the students' writing process on the computer had a significant impact statistically on their gains and outcomes in overall writing quality.

Design and Procedures

This study was a quantitative, statistical analysis assessing the effects of an instructor's feedback on college freshmen's writing before and during their composing processes, especially on the computer. The purpose of this study was to discover any statistically significant differences in writing gains and outcomes of 88 students between their pretest and post-test essays: 45 in the experimental group and 43 in the control group. The design and methodology for obtaining and analyzing the data place specific limitations on the variables, research instruments, the population of subjects sampled, and the procedure in the study.

The teaching methods for the professor in the experimental group were characterized by the following foci of instruction:

(1) Students composed and revised the first four essay assignments on the computer and wrote the remaining four essays by hand.

(2) The professor intervened with feedback during each student's planning and composing processes, especially on the computer, to answer any questions before the students completed the written product for a grade.

(3) Students engaged in a limited writing process: 50 minutes to plan and outline the five-paragraph essay; 100 minutes (two class periods) on the computer to write a draft before having each of the first four essays graded; 60 minutes to compose each of the remaining four handwritten essays; an additional 60 minutes to revise, edit, and correct an essay after it was graded.

(4) For correctness in the students' writing, the professor taught rules of grammar and standard written English by assigning exercises from a college handbook.

(5) The instructor taught the rhetorical modes of discourse (narration, description, methods of development and organization in exposition, and argumentation), relying heavily on essay models of past successful students.

In the control group, the instructor intervened during her students' writing process only on the first of eight handwritten essay assignments, carrying them from pre-writing, through the thesis sentence and outline, and then to the final draft.

However, the instructor did not intervene in her students' composing process for their subsequent essays, on which they had 60 minutes to plan and write each remaining assignment. The professor spent other times in classes covering very traditional rhetoric and grammar with drills and exercises, discussing sentence style, and putting her students into groups to analyze essays written by their peers.

The data collected revealed both instructional modes' effects on the gains and outcomes in the overall writing quality of 88 college freshman composition students enrolled at Dalton State College, a baccalaureate institution in the University System of Georgia. The professors of these courses collected writing samples taken before and after instruction (Sanders & Littlefield, 1975), because most theorists believe that a direct sample is the best way to measure writing ability (Diederich, 1974; Cooper, 1975, 1977). Forty-five students in the experimental group and 43 students in the control group each wrote a pretest essay at the beginning of the course before instruction, receiving 60 minutes to write the essay on a choice of four topics. Then each student wrote a post-test essay at the end of the course after instruction, again receiving 60 minutes to plan, compose, revise, and edit or correct the piece, but this time the students had a choice of four different topics. As guides to educational research point out, the pretest/post-test design is one effective way to determine the effects of an

educational treatment (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971; Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Cronbach, 1963).

In evaluating writing quality, a general-impression holistic rating session using expert readers--generally experienced English teachers trained to agree on certain global characteristics of a piece of writing--can produce acceptable reliability (Diederich, 1974; Cooper, 1975, 1977). For this study two college English faculty members served as raters. In addition to having several years of experience teaching college composition, both raters had several years of expertise and high agreement on holistic scoring for the Board of Regents' undergraduate essay exam in the University System of Georgia.

The two faculty raters read and scored a total of 176 randomly sorted essays, without knowing which were the 88 pretest essays or the 88 post-test essays. The raters scored the essays based on the following scale: (1) lowest failing score; (2) minimally passing score; (3) good passing score; (4) highest passing score. The raters followed this scale and grading criteria used to score Regents' Testing Program essays in Georgia (See Appendix).For any essay on which the raters disagreed by more than one point, a third expert, independent reader scored the piece in question; then the other raters used the two closest scores.

The study's researchers then separately totaled the raw scores for each pretest and post-test set of essays to get the

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mean score for each comparison group. For the rate of agreement on the essay scores, calculating the "product-moment correlation" determined the reliability between the two raters. For the experimental group's essay scoring, the correlation coefficient was .87, indicating sufficient reliability. For the control group the correlation coefficient was .80, which suggested adequate reliability.

In the statistical analysis of the scores, "paired T tests" determined whether there were significant differences between the pretest and post-test scores on the essays and differences between the experimental and control groups' post-test scores. The confidence levels of statistical significance for 95% of the time on the "paired T tests" are based on the following "p" values (significance of T): (1) * $p < .05$, significant; (2) ** $p < .01$, highly significant; (3) *** $p < .001$, very highly significant. The statistics also showed degrees of freedom (df).

Discussion of the Results

In overall writing quality, each of the 88 students wrote two essays on different topics, one pretest essay before instruction and one post-test essay after instruction. The two faculty raters scored each essay holistically on a scale of one (1--poor/failing) to four (4--superior/passing). This procedure resulted in two scores on each pretest writing sample and two scores on each post-test sample for each student in the study. For statistical analysis (paired T-tests), the raters combined

their two pretest scores on each student's essay, and then they combined their two post-test essay scores, resulting in the lowest possible score of two for a failing essay and the highest possible score of eight for a passing essay of superior quality.

The 45 students in the experimental group benefitted from their professor's informal feedback while he intervened during the students' planning and composing processes on the computer for the first four writing assignments. Then the students handwrote their remaining four essays in class. This group started with a mean score of 2.22 on the pretest essays but ended with a mean score of 4.47 on the post-test essays, an improved change of 2.25 (See Table 1). The T-test in statistical analysis indicated that the difference between these pretest and post-test scores was very highly significant ($T = -12.084$; $df = 44$; $p = .00006$; *** $p < .001$) in the main effect for this method of teaching college freshman composition (See Table 2). These students' pass rate was about 85% on the post-tests, also serving as the final essay exams at the end of the class.

The 43 students in the control group handwrote all of their essays, only receiving some feedback from their professor on their writing process for the first of their eight essay assignments. This group started with a mean score of 2.4 on the pretest essay but ended the course with a mean score of 3.98 on the post-test essay, an improvement of 1.58 (See Table 1). The T-Test in statistical analysis indicated that the difference

between the pretest and post-test scores was highly significant ($T = -10.078$; $df = 42$; $p = .004$; ** $p < .01$) in the main effect for this method of teaching college composition (See Table 2). These students' pass rate was 86% on the post-tests, which also served as final essay exams at the end of the class.

The researchers also ran statistical analysis between the experimental group's post-test scores and the control group's post-test scores. The T-Test indicated that the difference between each group's post-test scores was highly significant ($T = 2.72$; $df = 84$; $p = .003$; ** $p < .01$); these results strongly suggest that the students in the experimental group made greater gains and significantly higher outcomes on the post-tests than the students made in the control group (See Table 2).

Table 1

Mean Scores of Writing Quality Change from Pretest to Post-Test between the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Method/Group	Pretest	Post-test	Change
Experimental	2.22	4.47	2.25
Control	2.40	3.98	1.58

Table 2

Significance Tests for Overall Writing Quality between the Experimental Group and the Control Group

Method/Group	df	T	P
Experimental	44	-12.084***	.00006
Control	42	-10.078**	.004
Groups' Post-Tests	84	2.72 **	.003

* p < .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

These results further imply that the students in the experimental group made highly significant gains and outcomes because of their composing on the computer for the first four essays, with the professor's feedback while intervening during the students' stages of their planning and writing processes. Even though the control group did make statistically significant gains between the pretest and post-test essays, the researchers concluded that the experimental group's computer skills and feedback in the writing process gave these students clearly a statistically significant edge in the outcomes of their writing quality over the students in the control group, thus supporting the researchers' original hypothesis.

In addition, these gains implied that the students in the experimental group benefitted from planning, outlining, feedback, composing, revising, editing and correcting their essays on the computer, especially after having class discussion on some of the standard models of the five-paragraph essay in the various modes of discourse: narration and description, methods of development in exposition, as well as argument and persuasion. These findings further suggested that these students internalized organizational schemata, or outlined plans of writing forms, to develop and arrange such an impromptu essay successfully within 60 minutes to pass the final writing exam. The students' frequent engagement in the composing process on the computer, with the professor's feedback, gave them the necessary practice to write a passing final essay exam by meeting the expectations in essay schemata required by the target audience: three English faculty members reading and holistically scoring each of the 88 post-tests.

The following pretest and post-test writing samples help to illustrate the students' significant gains in writing quality:

Sixty-Minute Impromptu Pretest Essay of Student Number One

Topic: Who has been the greatest influence in your life?

As we grew and developed from infants to young adults, many things influenced our lives. Although many things have influenced me, I feel that my parents have shaped me the most. My mother and father have supported me since I was old enough to take an interest in anything at all. They took me

to church long before I would ever know the importance of children to be Christians. When I begin to show an interest in playing the piano, my father bought a tiny piano for me, despite the fact I was only three years old. I began school; they helped me learn new words and phrases, although I often used them wrongly. They always encouraged me to do my best, and were proud of me even when I felt my best wasn't good enough. I could never thank the both of them enough for all they have done for me. I hope that one day when I have children of my own, that I will treat them as I have been treated; for I feel that although I may often stumble, my parent have given me the grounding to get to my feet again.

This pretest essay received the lowest combined score of a "two" because the student failed to develop and organize the piece correctly with a sufficient thesis sentence, concrete examples, and specific details in the required five-paragraph essay.

Sixty-Minute Impromptu Post-Test Essay of Student Number One

Topic: Body language tells a person much about the feelings of another. How can you tell if someone is lying to you?

With down-cast eyes, the young man asserted again in a mumbling voice that he had forgotten his homework at home, as he shifted nervously from foot to foot. Any typical person, including the boy's teacher, could have seen through such as weak lie immediately. Most Americans, however, still

lie occasionally while using much of the same tell-tale body language as the young man above. In fact, one can usually tell if he is being lied to by watching the body language of the other person. Among the body language one should watch for are voice cues, eye motion, and body movements.

One of the main ways to catch someone lying is to listen for cues given by his voice. If one is telling a lie, he typically will not speak in a clear, loud voice with enunciated words. Instead, his speech may be mumbled and soft. He may also show extremes in the emotion displayed in his words. A person voicing a dishonest statement may become overly excited while trying to convince others that his words are true, or he may speak in a monotone voice and show no emotion at all. If one listens carefully, a voice can reveal much about a person's honesty.

In addition to voice cues, a person's eye movements can reveal whether or not he is telling the truth. When one is relating a falsity to another person, he is not likely to look directly at the person or the person's eyes. Instead, the liar may look at the floor or ceiling. I have noticed, also, that when someone is lying to me, I may think he is looking directly at me, but upon closer inspection, he is actually staring at my nose instead of my eyes. He might also have shifty eyes and not focus directly on any particular thing. After all, the eyes are the mirror to one's soul.

Finally, in addition to eye motions, one can tell that another is lying by watching the other body movements made by the person. A person who lies often sometimes seems to have difficulty in deciding what to do with his hands and feet. Instead of being comfortable standing still with his hands at his side, he may shift from foot to foot or walk around. He may also gesticulate elaborately with his hands, stuff his hands in and out of his pocket, or twiddle his thumbs or fingers incessantly. He may also pick at his fingernails or twist rings on his fingers, as well as many other nervous habits he may have acquired. Body movements are, if watched closely, more descriptive than words.

In conclusion, there are many ways in which one can tell that another is lying. The best indicators are cues given by body language. Paying attention to the voice, eye motion, and body movements of another can usually indicate whether or not the person is lying. Possibly, one day no one will lie, but until then, it pays to be a body language reader.

This post-test essay received a high combined score of "six" because the student composed a clear thesis sentence, developed the supporting paragraphs with concrete examples and details, and organized the paragraphs into a well-unified and coherent essay.

Sixty-Minute Impromptu Pretest Essay of Student Number Two

Topic: What was the most important event in your life?

Recently I graduated from highschool in Dalton. It was something I have been looking forward to for some time. It was probably the most important event in my life.

My parents wanted all their children to graduate and and persue their education in college. They want us to become whatever we want without having any setbacks. Graduation from high school was an important step in persuing that goal.

When I was in my last years at school I wasn't sure if I could make it until the end. I just couldn't make myself enjoy school. I quit for a quarter and realized that school is very important because nothing can be done without an education. I went back and made it through with no problems.

My family and I will remember the days in the school system and be proud to know I finished something, and did it well. I hope college will be a good experience and I accomplish everything I set my mind to do.

This essay received the lowest combined score of a "two" because the student failed to develop and organize the piece correctly with a sufficient thesis sentence, concrete examples and specific details in a required five-paragraph essay related to the topic.

Sixty-Minute Impromptu Post-Test Essay of Student Number Two

Topic: Discuss what makes art festivals such popular events.

There are many art festivals happening all the time. I enjoy going to the festivals. I go to Prater's Mill each time they have a festival. Three reasons art festivals are so popular are the wide variety of people, the different activities, and the education.

The wide variety of people at festivals is one reason these events are so popular. I love to see different types of people gathered in one place. Watching the wood carvers is so interesting. They start with a block of wood and end with a beautiful sculpture. It also amazes me how an artist can turn a blank piece of canvas into a design in minutes. These artists move so quickly through the painting process. The possibilities on what they can paint are endless. Of course, everyone loves the magicians. They walk around making balloon animals and giving them away. They also perform magic shows, which I always enjoy.

Another reason festivals are popular is the different activities. It is always fun to dunk my best friend in the dunking booth. Hitting the target is sometimes harder than it seems. Even if I do not hit the target, it is still fun to watch my friend jump when I throw the ball. The children also love to get their faces painted. Balloons are the most popular design for face painting. It is entertaining to see

little kids rush around with different designs on their faces. In addition, everyone likes to get something free; door prize drawings are a popular event at the festival. The prizes are usually something small, but they are free. I won a plastic frog last year at Prater's Mill.

The last reason festivals are so popular is the education. I learn something every time I go to a festival. There are signs about the history of the festival. People have brochures at their booths with information about themselves and their work as well. I also love to watch the process of how one thing can be changed into something else. The wood carver at Prater's Mill will explain what he is doing as he changes a block of wood into a wooden lizard for me. I also like to wander around talking to the participants. They all have interesting stories to tell. I learn so much from them.

Art festivals are a popular event all over the world. People come from miles away to participate in the festivals. I enjoy attending the festivals every year. Three reasons art festivals are so popular are the wide variety of people, the different activities, and the education.

This post-test essay received a high score of "six" because the student wrote a clear thesis related to the topic, developed the supporting paragraphs with concrete examples and details, and organized the paragraphs into a well-unified and coherent essay.

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Conclusion

This study suggests numerous variables or features in writing instruction for further research. More studies on useful feedback while students compose on the computer will help college educators realize how they may benefit their students more to make greater gains in overall writing quality. Perhaps remaining "up close and personal" in teaching essential communication skills--even in our high-tech academic world of computers, word processors, desk-top publishing and the world-wide web--will produce much more effective college writers, as well as more successful graduates and employees in their future careers.

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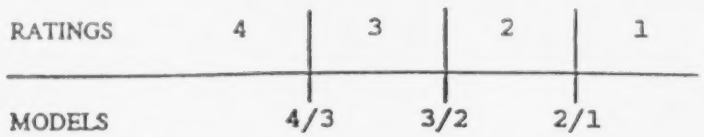
INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCORING REGENTS' TESTING PROGRAM ESSAYS

DESCRIPTION OF ESSAY SCORING PROCEDURE

Raters should read each essay quickly to gain a general impression of its quality in relation to the model essays and assign a rating based on that comparison. This approach, holistic rating, contrasts with the analytic grading commonly used in essay evaluation, but evidence indicates that holistic rating is much faster and produces more uniform results.

The essays are rated on a four-point scale in which "1" is the lowest score and "4" is the highest score. The model essays represent borderline cases; each essay to be rated must, by definition, fall above or below a model.



One model essay represents each dividing line. An essay better than the "2/1" model and worse than the "3/2" model would be rated "2." An essay worse than the "2/1" model becomes "1." An essay better than the "4/3" model becomes "4."

Note carefully that raters should compare the essays they read with the models. They should not rate in terms of their usual grading standards or some abstract standard. They should not associate the ratings with the traditional grades A, B, C, D, F.

The testing subcommittee of the University System Academic Committee on English attempts to choose models by using the following definitions of competency, although it realizes that these definitions are by no means exhaustive.

4: The "4" essay has a clear central idea that relates directly to the assigned topic. The essay has a clear organizational plan. The major points are developed logically and are supported with concrete, specific evidence or details that arouse the reader's interest. The essay reveals the writer's ability to select effective, appropriate words and phrases; to write varied, sophisticated sentences; to make careful use of effective transitional devices; and to maintain a consistent, appropriate tone. The essay is essentially free from mechanical errors, it contains no serious grammatical errors, and the ideas are expressed freshly and vividly.

3: The "3" essay has a clear central idea that relates directly to the assigned topic. It contains most of the qualities of good writing itemized above. The essay generally differs from a "4" in that it shows definite competence, but lacks distinction. The examples and details are pertinent, but may not be particularly vivid or sharply observed; the word choice is generally accurate, but seldom -- if ever -- really felicitous. The writer adopts an appropriate, consistent tone. The essay may contain a few errors in grammar and mechanics.

PASSING 2: The "2" essay meets only the basic criteria, and those in a minimal way. The essay has a central idea related directly to the assigned topic and presented with sufficient clarity that the reader is aware of the writer's purpose. The organization is clear enough for the reader to perceive the writer's plan. The paragraphs coherently present some evidence or details to substantiate the points. The writer uses ordinary, everyday words accurately and idiomatically and generally avoids both the monotony created by series of choppy, simple sentences and the incoherence caused by long, tangled sentences. Although the essay may contain a few serious grammatical errors and several mechanical errors, they are not of sufficient severity or frequency to obscure the sense of what the writer is saying.

FAILING 1: The "1" essay has any one of the following problems to an extraordinary degree or it has several to a limited degree: it lacks a central idea; it lacks a clear organizational plan; it does not develop its points or develops them in a repetitious, incoherent, or illogical way; it does not relate directly to the assigned topic; it contains several serious grammatical errors; it contains numerous mechanical errors; ordinary, everyday words are used inaccurately and unidiomatically; it contains a limited vocabulary so that the words chosen frequently do not serve the writer's purpose; syntax is frequently rudimentary or tangled; or the essay is so brief that the rater cannot make an accurate judgement of the writer's ability.

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